

# Commemorating Madison Grant in California State Parks

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Conservationist, Author, and Eugenicist Extraordinaire

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David G. McIntosh

*A legacy of hate, exclusion, and White nationalism on California's public lands*

**ABSTRACT:** A memorial in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in Northern California continued to honor the name of Madison Grant (1865–1937) until 2021. De Forest Grant (Madison's younger brother), John D. Rockefeller Jr., the New York Zoological Society, and others dedicated the monument in 1948. Madison Grant's most well-known book, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), became the basis for monumental atrocities leading up to and during World War II. This article explores Grant's racist legacy and claims he made that successfully convinced lawmakers to pass legislation restricting the rights of non-White peoples and immigrants. His book and the ideas it contained continue to serve as a basis for hate and exclusion in the United States.

**KEY WORDS:** Madison Grant, conservation, Save the Redwoods, California State Parks, eugenics, monument and memorials

## Introduction

During a trip to Northern California in January 2019, I encountered a monument dedicated to the memory of Madison Grant. Anyone who knows the history of racist ideas in the United States would find this memorial's continued existence quite striking. I felt a pang of dismay over seeing his name honored at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. A bronze commemorative plaque mounted on a 16,000-pound granite boulder described him as a “conservationist, author, anthropologist, [and] one of the founders of the Save the Redwoods League” (see Figure 1). How could Madison Grant's name continue to enjoy such a prominent place on public lands in the twenty-first century? He penned one of the most notorious screeds in modern history against immigrants, Jewish people, Black people, and other groups in *The Passing of the Great Race*—a book that became the basis for monumental atrocities leading up to and during World War II. Grant's words and teachings live on in the ethos of White supremacy, continuing to serve as a basis for hate and

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**Figure 1.** “Madison Grant memorial (plaque detail) at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park.” (Photograph by author, January 17, 2019)

exclusion in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Yet few people seem to know who he is. As such, the name “Madison Grant” may not evoke the same visceral response as that of certain Confederate leaders; however, to honor him on public lands is a comparable transgression upon equitability. This article illuminates Grant’s heinous legacy, illustrating why my colleagues and I labored tirelessly to convince the state of California that his name does not deserve to be celebrated on our public lands.

#### Madison Grant: Conservationist

The historical marker commemorating Madison Grant stood seemingly undisturbed for seventy-three years. The plaque honored a man whose profound influence on some of the darker chapters of this country’s history—and the world’s—is undeniable. Dedicated in 1948 by his younger brother De Forest and others, the memorial provided no recognition of quite how controversial the elder Grant was, describing him in the first place as a “conservationist.” Just so.

Madison Grant’s passion for conservation led him to work toward preserving big game animals and, eventually, the White race. These interests first developed during his childhood. Grant was born shortly after the end of the Civil War to a patrician Manhattan family. He was descended from the earliest European

<sup>1</sup> In this article, “White” and “Black” are both capitalized in the same spirit as that of my friend and colleague Paul Spickard in his introductory article. See “Reckoning with Our Past: California State Parks and the Dark Side of the Conservation Movement,” this volume, page 9, footnote 1.

colonizers in the Mid-Atlantic region on both his mother's and father's sides of the family, Dutch Walloon Huguenots who founded New Amsterdam in the 1620s, and members of the Great Puritan Migration in 1630, respectively.<sup>2</sup> In his youth, he kept company among similarly affluent and privileged elite families in New York. Grant spent a considerable amount of time in the countryside and on his grandfather's estate, encountering animal life that first aroused a curiosity in natural history.

Grant studied with private tutors and abroad during his teenage years in Dresden, Germany, where hunting initially intrigued him. While admiring an impressive collection of deer heads mounted to a lodge wall, Grant noticed that the specimens in the three-hundred-year-long Dresden collection gradually grew smaller over time. As Grant's biographer historian Jonathan Spiro points out, he correctly reasoned that humankind's impact through artificial selection was directly responsible for this degeneration. Upon his return to the States, Yale admitted the young aristocrat at sophomore status.<sup>3</sup> Grant subsequently attended Columbia Law and passed the bar exam in 1890. However, Grant's finances meant that he did not need to earn a living by practicing law, although he maintained an office on Wall Street. Instead, he spent a great deal of his time far away from the city tracking and shooting game for sport, the activity that exhilarated and inspired him most. Grant's family wealth provided the means for him to hunt anywhere he wished.<sup>4</sup>

Many founding leaders of the conservation movement developed an interest in protecting wildlife stemming from similar passions. Grant was friends with many of them. He joined the Boone and Crockett Club—a hunting club and the oldest wildlife conservation organization in the US—a few years after its initial formation by Teddy Roosevelt and some of his outdoors buddies. The club's first objective was “[t]o promote manly sport with the rifle.”<sup>5</sup> Grant's hobnobbing with Boone and Crockett Club members provided his first proper introduction to conservation. As the club grew, Grant became one of its most popular and influential members and developed a close friendship with Roosevelt. A short time after Grant joined, the club elected him as secretary, which began an over forty-year tenure of service that did not cease until his death in 1937 while the sitting club president.<sup>6</sup> The relationships he formed due to his extensive involvement in the organization helped Grant develop a broader commitment to the outdoors and bolstered his later lobbying efforts.

2 Grant's biographer, Jonathan Peter Spiro, noted that a reconstruction of Grant's life was challenging because many of his papers were damaged, discarded, or “disappeared,” while many of his closest correspondents burned their papers. Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2008), xiii-xiv, 6.

3 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 7–8.

4 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 14.

5 George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt, “The Boone and Crockett Club,” in *American Big-Game Hunting: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club*, ed. George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Forest and Stream Pub. Co., 1893), 9.

6 William G. Sheldon, “A History of the Boone and Crockett Club: Milestones in Wildlife Conservation,” (typewritten manuscript, 1955), 290.

By the mid-1890s, Grant regularly and directly witnessed the need for an American conservation movement. His time spent hunting was not entirely gratifying because of the noticeable depletion of game. If the government took no action, the nation's wildlife stocks would weaken and decay sooner or later. He began hunting more often despite his game conservation efforts—or possibly even because of his interest in them. Grant explored Alaska, Newfoundland, and the Rockies, where he watched as big herds slowly disappeared.<sup>7</sup> Grant recognized this observation as a disturbing reality not only for the continuation of his own successful hunting trips but also for the future generations of those he perversely thought of as the only legitimate Americans.

Madison Grant: Author

Grant's Northern California monument further described him as an "author," a role that was intimately tied to his animal conservation efforts, at least at first. Grant drafted and published his first article in 1894 with encouragement from Roosevelt.<sup>8</sup> Grant chose *The Century Magazine* for publication and titled his paper, "The Vanishing Moose and Their Extermination in the Adirondacks." He described the moose's status in upstate New York, detailed a history of the species and the decimation of its numbers, and then portended a stark fate for the fading animal. This thematic sequencing of topics was rehashed in later works (most notably in 1916). Grant expressed concern primarily about unsportsmanlike hunting practices but reserved the sharpest criticisms for Native peoples, who relied on the moose for hides, meat, and maintaining their livelihoods. Grant insisted that the animals killed every year by "Indians and half-breeds" enjoyed no protection under current laws, other than when those laws were used to "annoy sportsmen."<sup>9</sup> Moose numbers were flagging—that was true. However, much more detrimental to the population than hunters was a set of complementary and synergetic environmental factors that included deforestation, the extermination of predator species, subsequent rising deer populations, and the proliferation of a brain parasite lethal to moose.<sup>10</sup> Much like in his later works, Grant misconstrued the observable data and haughtily inserted his own attitudes as the concluding word.

For Grant, neither preserving biological diversity nor the welfare of the moose itself was of paramount concern, a typical attitude among early conservationists. Instead, the needs and perceived rights of sportsmen like Grant superseded all "ungentlemanly" hunting practices, regardless of the motivations underlying them. As he wrote, "[t]he noblest way for a real sportsman to secure a set of antlers is the

7 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 14.

8 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 21.

9 Madison Grant, "The Vanishing Moose and their Extermination in the Adirondacks," *The Century Magazine* 47, no. 3 (January 1894): 354.

10 Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 23–26.

still hunt,” implying that “real sportsmen” were, in his mind, affluent, White, civilized Euro-Americans.<sup>11</sup> After the publication of this article, Grant began lobbying the New York State Legislature to adopt protections for the moose. Grant argued that the moose would be driven to extinction without government action. In 1896, William White Niles introduced legislation in New York State proposing the prohibition of the unsportsmanlike hunting practices Grant condemned.<sup>12</sup> For his part, Grant was “tireless in submitting to committees and members of the Legislature facts and arguments.”<sup>13</sup> As a result, in 1897, New York adopted the Adirondack Deer Law, thereby offering small protections to game populations.<sup>14</sup> Grant’s lobbying efforts resulted in his first legislative victory, albeit a small one. More importantly, he learned that relentless campaigning effectively influenced public policymaking.

Grant continued writing, concentrating his efforts on threatened game animals he encountered on numerous trips. During the years that followed, he published *The Caribou* (1902), *The Moose* (1903), *The Rocky Mountain Goat* (1905), and several others printed as Boone and Crockett Club reports. In each publication, Grant highlighted the ephemeral nature of remaining populations if government regulation was not implemented immediately.

Part of what made Grant a compelling and successful lobbyist was his ability to explain complicated and, at times, scientific topics in terms that laypersons (i.e., legislators) could understand. When he broached the topic of a New York zoological garden in correspondence and a subsequent dinner meeting with Roosevelt in late 1894—specifically in the name of game protection—Roosevelt again offered his support. Ultimately, the Boone and Crockett Club sanctioned Grant’s idea and appointed him chairman of the committee in charge of spearheading the effort.<sup>15</sup> Grant discovered that Andrew Haswell Green (popularly known as “the Father of Greater New York”) had introduced bills to establish a zoological park for several years.<sup>16</sup> Green’s plans, however, always faced fierce opposition. Grant immediately acted and again recruited Niles. Niles agreed to introduce Green’s bill with the understanding that the Boone and Crockett Club would organize the society that would create and administer the zoological garden, as well as provide its leadership.

In 1895, Grant’s lobbying, strengthened by the prestige of the club, persuaded the state of New York to establish the New York Zoological Society; he and eight other Boone and Crockett Club members served on the first board of managers.<sup>17</sup> The

11 Grant, “The Vanishing Moose,” 354.

12 William Cary Sanger, “The Adirondack Deer Law,” in *Trail and Camp-Fire: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club*, ed. George Bird Grinnell and Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Forest and Stream Pub. Co., 1897), 269.

13 Sanger, “The Adirondack Deer Law,” 271.

14 Sanger, “The Adirondack Deer Law,” 272.

15 Madison Grant, “The Origin of the New York Zoological Society,” in Grinnell and Roosevelt, *Trail and Camp-Fire*, 313.

16 “The Stecklers,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1897.

17 Grant, “The Origin of the New York Zoological Society,” 313.

vision Grant sold to Niles and to Assembly Speaker Hamilton Fish entailed the creation of “a zoological park on lines entirely divergent from the Old World zoological gardens,” where animals could roam freely in an open environment similar to their natural habitats and interact with other animals, a far cry from caged menageries such as the one administered by the Central Park planning commission.<sup>18</sup> The initially planned layout of the zoological garden proposed an area one hundred acres greater than the largest zoo in existence at the time, the sixty-acre Berlin Zoological Garden, with an additional one-hundred acres allotted for future growth.<sup>19</sup> Large North American game mammals enjoyed special consideration; the American bison alone had a proposed enclosure totaling twenty acres.<sup>20</sup>

Although Grant drove the creation of both the society and zoo, he tended to shy away from prominent leadership positions, especially in the earliest parts of his career. Grant initially served as the society’s secretary before later being elected vice president and eventually president, a role he served until his death.<sup>21</sup> Grant’s concept, which was “to preserve to future generations some remnant of the heritage which was our fathers’, and which, to a great extent, still is ours,” can still be visited in with some of its original form remaining.<sup>22</sup> The Bronx Zoo opened in 1899 to tremendous acclaim and was an immediate success.<sup>23</sup>

#### Madison Grant: “Anthropologist”

It could be argued that Grant’s career as an “anthropologist” (I refer to him by that title in only the loosest sense of the word so as not to offend legitimate anthropologists) started in 1906 with an infamous episode at the Bronx Zoo.<sup>24</sup> With Grant’s approval and endorsement, zoo director William Hornaday urged a Mbuti man named Mbye Otabenga—popularly known as Ota Benga—to enter a cage alongside the apes at the primate house.<sup>25</sup> Ota Benga was born in the Belgian

18 Grant, “The Origin of the New York Zoological Society,” 313.

19 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 31–32.

20 Grant, “The Origin of the New York Zoological Society,” 318–19.

21 “Madison Grant, 71, Zoologist, Is Dead: Head of New York Zoological Society Since 1925 Sponsored the Bronx River Parkway,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1937.

22 Grant, “The Origin of the New York Zoological Society,” 320.

23 “Big Crowd at The Zoo: Serpents and The Python’s Eggs the Drawing Feature,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1899.

24 I would not be alone in asserting this, even accounting for latent presentism. Writing in 1923, anthropologist Robert Lowie stated, “Perhaps Mr. Grant is not, after all, the champion of heredity he professes to be when it suits his convenience. . . . To sum up, it is not the professional anthropologist, but the professional heredity-monger that disregards the influence of heredity *ad libitum*.” Robert H. Lowie, “Psychology, Anthropology, and Race,” *American Anthropologist* 25, no. 3 (1923): 295.

25 Pamela Newkirk, *Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga* (New York: Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2015), 67. When asked about “the impropriety in exhibiting Benga in the monkey cage, and if he was allowing it with the acquiescence of the Directors of the Zoological Society,” Hornaday responded, “Yes, what is being done in the matter is with the acquiescence of the society. The Secretary, Mr. Madison Grant, was in fact present when I made the arrangement with

Congo, where he lived until he was purportedly captured by slave traders before being brought to the US.

The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition committee hired a host of agents to procure living specimens for display in the ethnology exhibit.<sup>26</sup> The Chief of the Department of Anthropology, William John McGee, hired Samuel Phillips Verner to secure a group of “African Pygmies.” Verner previously achieved minor fame resulting from his time spent as a missionary in Africa. He brought a group of five individuals, including Ota Benga, to St. Louis in 1904, for which the World’s Fair committee later awarded Verner the gold medal in anthropology.<sup>27</sup>

Afterward, Verner returned the group to the Congo but, for reasons that are not clear, Ota Benga accompanied him on his return journey to the US, arriving in New York in 1906.<sup>28</sup> When Verner abruptly left New York to attend to some business matters in North Carolina, he negotiated an arrangement with Grant and Hornaday for Benga to remain behind and stay at the Bronx Zoo.<sup>29</sup> At the beginning of September 1906, Grant and Hornaday exploited their uncommon guest’s visit. They eventually coaxed Benga into a cage with an Asian orangutan at the monkey house. Bones were strewn about the cage floor for an added sense of savagery. A substantial public uproar and debate surrounded Benga’s display. Visitors wondered if he were indeed human and, if so, what he was doing inside of an animal cage.<sup>30</sup> The obvious juxtaposition of an African man alongside humankind’s closest living relatives clearly demonstrated Social Darwinian notions of evolution and progress. Attendance at the zoo, meanwhile, increased drastically, drawing 100,000 more visitors on Monday, September 17 than on the same date, a Sunday, one year prior.<sup>31</sup> The *New York Times* headline read, “Bush-Man Shares a Cage with Bronx Park Apes.”<sup>32</sup>

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Dr. Verner for the keep of the little African savage.” In “Man and Monkey Show Disapproved by Clergy,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1906, 1.

<sup>26</sup> The committee’s “recruits” were not merely intended for display. The 1904 Summer Olympics, the first held in the United States, were included as part of the St. Louis Exposition’s extended program. McGee envisioned and organized a two-day exhibition called “Anthropology Days” in order to maximize the visibility of the anthropological subjects. It included traditional Olympic events (e.g., 100-yard dash, shot put, javelin throw, hurdles, etc.) but also featured bolo throwing, pole climbing, and mud fighting. Archery turned out to be a “disappointment” because, unlike Western expectations, many of the so-called “savages” had never before used or seen a bow and arrow. See James E. Sullivan, ed., *Spalding’s Official Athletic Almanac for 1905* (New York: The American Publishing Co., 1905), 248–63.

<sup>27</sup> Newkirk, *Spectacle*, 139.

<sup>28</sup> Newkirk, *Spectacle*, 168–69.

<sup>29</sup> Newkirk, *Spectacle*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Newkirk, *Spectacle*, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Letter to Charles T. Barney, NYZS Executive Committee Chairman from William T. Hornaday, September 19, 1906, Collection 1012–01, WCS Archives collection of digitized materials related to Ota Benga, Wildlife Conservation Society Archives, New York.

<sup>32</sup> “Bush-Man Shares a Cage with Bronx Park Apes,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1906, 1.

The backlash was immediate.<sup>33</sup> A group of Black Baptist ministers organized a committee that lobbied for Ota Benga's release from the zoo. James H. Gordon, a member of the committee, offered to put Benga under his care at the Howard Orphan Asylum in Brooklyn, where he was director. However, Hornaday did not relent and stated that he would keep the exhibit open until ordered to stop by the Zoological Society. The veneer of Hornaday's defense, as expressed to the *New York Times*, survives to insult us in the present:

I do not wish to offend my colored brothers' feelings or the feelings of any one, for that matter. I am giving the exhibition purely as an ethnological exhibit. . . . I hope my colored brethren will not take the absurd position that I am giving the exhibit to show the close analogy of the African savage to the apes. Benga is in the primate house because that was the most comfortable place we could find for him.<sup>34</sup>

Grant wielded a remarkable amount of influence over the zoo even though he was merely the society's secretary. The Office of the Mayor, which refused to hear the committee's concerns, referred the ministers instead to Grant. When confronted in his Wall Street office by the group, Grant told them Benga was "at the Zoo to help care for the animals."<sup>35</sup> In a later letter to the mayor, Hornaday wrote, "Mr. Grant considers it imperative that the Society should not even seem to be dictated to by the colored ministers."<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the resulting controversy meant that his exhibition lasted less than a week.

Hoping to avoid a court battle, Grant had Benga removed from the primate house exhibit, though he still resided at the zoo and slept in the primate house at night.<sup>37</sup> Sensing the gravity of their situation, Hornaday drafted a frantic telegram to Verner on September 17 that read, "Boy has become wholly uncontrollable also dangerous. Impossible to send him to you. Please come for him at once."<sup>38</sup> Hornaday contacted Gordon later that same day to inquire about the seriousness of the offer to accept Benga at the orphanage. The pair shared a harsh conversation because, according to Hornaday, "they are not willing to take Ota Benga at all unless they can own him absolutely and for all time."<sup>39</sup> Hornaday's misappropriation of the word "own" demonstrated that he missed the entire point of the

33 The *New York Times* subtitles ran, "Some Laugh Over His Antics, but Many Are Not Pleased. Keeper Frees Him at Times. Then, with Bow and Arrow, the Pygmy from the Congo Takes to the Woods," from "Man and Monkey Show Disapproved by Clergy," *New York Times*, September 10, 1906, 1.

34 "Negro Ministers Act to Free the Pygmy," *New York Times*, September 11, 1906, 2.

35 "The Mayor Won't Help to Free Caged Pygmy," *New York Times*, September 12, 1906, 9.

36 "Letter to Henry Fairfield Osborn, Sr. from William T. Hornaday," September 11, 1906, Collection 1012, WCS Archives.

37 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 47.

38 "Telegram draft to Samuel Verner at North Carolina address from William T. Hornaday," September 17, 1906, Collection 1001, WCS Archives.

39 Letter to Samuel Verner from William T. Hornaday, September 18, 1906, Collection 1012-01, WCS Archives.



committee's concerns with one he regarded as a "very unruly savage."<sup>40</sup> Throughout the entire ordeal, and for years afterward, Hornaday blamed the *New York Times* for creating such a spectacle "out of nothing" and "deliberately manufacturing . . . the sensation."<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the draft of Hornaday's article for the *Zoological Society Bulletin* revealed his true intentions. At some point between drafting the undated article in September 1906 and its publication in October, Hornaday changed the title from "An African Pigmy Exhibited at the Zoological Park" to simply "An African Pigmy." The "African pigmy," Hornaday initially wrote in the first sentence, "is on exhibition every afternoon at the Zoological Park"; however, his printed copy neatly read "was employed in the Zoological Park."<sup>42</sup>

Gordon acquired custody of Benga at the end of the month and took him to the orphanage. Benga later relocated to Lynchburg, Virginia, where he was to live at the Lynchburg Seminary and College under the guardianship of its President, Reverend Gregory Hayes. However, Hayes died less than two months after Benga's arrival, so the seminary sent Benga back to New York.<sup>43</sup> Several years later, Benga again returned to Lynchburg, where he lived with Hayes's widow, Mary, and her new husband William Patterson Allen.<sup>44</sup> In Lynchburg, Benga found companionship within the Black community, making friends with the neighborhood children who were also his schoolmates. Nevertheless, he longed to return to the home from which he had been taken, but World War I made this hope an impossible one. Distraught and losing any semblance of hope, on March 20, 1916, Benga aimed a pistol into his chest and pulled the trigger.<sup>45</sup>

#### Madison Grant: Racist Extraordinaire

Though not mentioned on the memorializing plaque, a more apt title to attribute to Grant would highlight his being among the most prominent racists of the twentieth century and his direct involvement with eugenics—if not his place as its foremost

40 Letter to Samuel Verner from William T. Hornaday, September 17, 1906, Collection 1012-01, WCS Archives.

41 Letter to George B. McClellan, Mayor of New York from William T. Hornaday, September 12, 1906, Collection 1000-01, WCS Archives; Letter to Charles T. Barney, September 19, 1906. In June 1924, a member of the public, twenty-seven-year-old John Cromartie, wrote Hornaday at the Zoological Gardens and suggested adding various examples of the human race to the zoo. To demonstrate his suggestion was made in "good faith," Cromartie (a five foot, eleven inch man of Scottish descent), offered himself up for exhibition; see Letter to William Hornaday from John Cromartie, June 3, 1924, Collection 1012-01, WCS Archives. Hornaday recollected the 1906 fiasco in his response, steadfastly blaming the *Times*, Letter to John Cromartie, *The Wide World*, from William T. Hornaday, June 6, 1924, Collection 1012-01, WCS Archives.

42 "Draft of article that appeared under the title 'An African Pigmy' in the *Zoological Society Bulletin* (October 1906): 301-302," n.d., Collection 1012-01, WCS Archives; William T. Hornaday, "An African Pigmy," *Zoological Society Bulletin* (October 1906): 301-2.

43 Newkirk, *Spectacle*, 203-4.

44 Newkirk, *Spectacle*, 229.

45 Newkirk, *Spectacle*, 241. In September 2017, Lynchburg dedicated a historical marker to Benga's memory; Virginia Donna Bryson, "New Memorial Sets the Record Straight on the Tragic Story of Ota Benga," *Equal Times*, December 12, 2017.

public-facing and enthusiastic disciple. His early conservation efforts and his motivations for seeing Ota Benga on display at the Bronx Zoo were indistinguishable, linked by his eugenicist mindset. Grant's mission was to create a White nationalist paradise to be enjoyed by future generations of the privileged White race to the exclusion of the "lesser" races.<sup>46</sup> More plainly, Grant viewed big game as analogous to the White race: if not protected, they would be driven to extinction. Along with Henry Herbert Goddard and Charles Benedict Davenport ("the most prominent racist" of those with "proper scientific training"), Grant's influence in shaping the American eugenics movement was monumental.<sup>47</sup> His authority derived from a book he published in 1916, again on the topic of species degradation and extinction. However, *The Passing of the Great Race* struck a decidedly more menacing tone than his earlier publications.

In 1916, the publication of *The Passing of the Great Race, or: The Racial Basis of European History* secured Grant's legacy. Former president Theodore Roosevelt's compliments, quoted from personal correspondence, described the text in *Scribner's Magazine* as "a capital book. . . and all Americans should be sincerely grateful to you for writing it."<sup>48</sup> Many Americans were not grateful, nor should they have been. According to Spiro, the book enjoyed only modest sales despite going through four editions.<sup>49</sup> Based on recycled philosophies of earlier scientific racists, combined with the pseudoscientific concepts of Francis Galton's eugenics, Grant warned that the American people—by which he specifically meant White Americans of northern European origin—were in danger of being swamped by a horde of inferior peoples from all parts of the globe.

Madison Grant was not the "founder of scientific racism," as some have claimed.<sup>50</sup> That notorious title would be awarded to any number of thinkers who predated Grant, including Carl von Linné, Samuel Stanhope Smith, or Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, the latter of whom was the first to employ the scientific method in studies on race.<sup>51</sup> Arthur de Gobineau's 1853 book *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (*Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*) first introduced the supposed superiority of Teutonic Aryan stock in terms the Nazis would later promote. Anthropologist Joseph Deniker introduced "*la race nordique*" as one

46 Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 146–48; Garland E. Allen, "Culling the Herd: Eugenics and the Conservation Movement in the United States," *Journal of the History of Biology* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 43–44.

47 Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 69.

48 Theodore Roosevelt, "The Passing of the Great Race; Or, the Racial Basis of European History By Madison Grant," *Scribner's Magazine* 62, no. 6 (December 1917), 32.

49 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 161–63.

50 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 266.

51 Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *Decas collectionis suae craniorum diversarum gentium illustrate* (Gottingen, Germany: H. Dieterich, 1790).

of the ten “principal races of Europe” in 1897.<sup>52</sup> Deniker’s unnecessarily complex classification prompted US economist William Zebina Ripley to consolidate the European races into merely three. Ripley also adopted Deniker’s terminology and equated the Nordic to the Teutonic races.<sup>53</sup> Later, Grant likewise promoted the belief that three distinct races comprised European peoples, the finest and noblest being the Nordics (the others were the Mediterraneans and the Alpines). He described the Nordics as consisting of Teutonic groups who represented the Aryan language and culture.<sup>54</sup> As it turned out, Grant did not have many original ideas related to either the historical or scientific understanding of humankind. Instead, he made only a feeble and inept borrowing of others’ suppositions. He undeniably succeeded in explaining concepts in terms easily understood by the nonscientist, promoting these racist ideas more broadly, and convincing lawmakers to pass legislation based on his interpretations.

Grant’s popularizing influence helped ensure that eugenics was not merely a fringe idea despite its inherent racist overtones. By 1928, 376 colleges and universities in the US offered coursework in eugenics, and 90 percent of high school biology textbooks taught the “science” of eugenics. State and local fairs held eugenics competitions for the “fittest families.”<sup>55</sup> Unchecked immigration, miscegenation, and overbreeding by the “unfit” combined with underproducing by the “superior Nordics” were all tantamount to “race suicide,” a phrase Grant copied from sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross.<sup>56</sup> Paradoxically, Grant himself never married and conceived no known children—neither did two of his three siblings.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, Grant alleged that unless the best of the Nordic race in the US continued to be fruitful and multiply, outpacing the lesser races, the racial purity of the country would degenerate. The superior traits and characteristics they embodied—including strength, beauty, and intelligence—would be bred out of the population; the “great race” would pass, having been driven extinct by their own shortsightedness and passivity.

If this prophecy seems similar to Grant’s prognostications on the moose or caribou, then a passage from the book’s first page should not appear shocking: “Man is an animal differing from his fellow inhabitants of the globe, not in kind but only in degree of development, and an intelligent study of the human species must be preceded by an extended knowledge of other mammals.”<sup>58</sup> Grant struggled to typify scientific objectivity and relied heavily on his personal experience with wild

52 Joseph Deniker, “Les races de l’Europe,” *Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris* 8, no. 1 (1897): 299, 301.

53 William Zebina Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1899), 597–606.

54 Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race, or: the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1916), 17–18.

55 Diane Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity* (Amherst: NY, Humanity Books, 1998), 10–11.

56 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 43.

57 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 100.

58 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 3.

game. For example, he stated, “a permanent site is the basis of an agricultural community, and involves at least a partial abandonment of the chase, because . . . hunted animals soon leave the neighborhood of settlements.”<sup>59</sup> By Grant’s reckoning, animals “leave” the area out of their own impulse, rather than being hunted to depletion by the human inhabitants of the nearby settlement. This assertion not only betrayed his flawed sense of how the basic mechanics of ecology operate, even by early twentieth-century understandings, but it also missed the intended point of some of his own earlier work, such as that on the caribou or moose.

To describe Grant’s ideas as merely erroneous or strange would downplay their greater significance. He was not simply pontificating. His claims were tenacious critiques of the contemporary social atmosphere that he claimed required immediate solutions. The residual African population of the formerly enslaved was one concern, but future immigration presented him with a more pressing worry.<sup>60</sup> From Grant’s point of view, outsiders who did not share the same religion or ideals were slowly replacing and crowding out stocks of “native Americans” (unironically used repeatedly to imply “those of colonial ancestry”). Of the “swarms of Polish Jews,” he wrote:

[t]hese immigrants adopt the language of the native American; they wear his clothes; they steal his name; and they are beginning to take his women, but they seldom adopt his religion or understand his ideals, and while he is being elbowed out of his own home the American looks calmly abroad and urges on others the suicidal ethics which are exterminating his own race.<sup>61</sup>

Notwithstanding Spiro’s finding that *The Passing of the Great Race* garnered unimpressive sales, Grant championed the thoughts on immigration it contained tirelessly, especially to legislators, whom he had grown quite adept at swaying to see his point of view over the years.<sup>62</sup>

Some would argue that Grant was merely a product of early twentieth-century comprehensions of science. However, the prognosis for the Nordic race made Grant’s fears evident: he was not espousing scientific theory but rather trying to protect White supremacy, privilege, and power. According to Grant, the “great race” would pass out of time and memory, replaced by an “unstable and bastardized population.”<sup>63</sup> Gradually these populations would occupy the entire country, “literally breeding out their former masters.”<sup>64</sup> Grant was not speaking

59 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 110.

60 Grant extolled the reputed merits of slavery as virtuous, asserting, “slaves are often more fortunate than freemen when treated with reasonable humanity.” Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 8.

61 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 81.

62 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 161.

63 Madison Grant, “Introduction,” in Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1920), xxix.

64 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 65.

euphemistically; he spoke of slaves and immigrants almost indistinguishably. “Master” status did not derive from holding the lash but rather from belonging to the Nordic race. In true fear-mongering style, he added that this process “is occurring to-day in many parts of America, especially in New England.”<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, Grant—the prophet of Nordic superiority—had the answer in his intent to see the reinstatement of “the pride of race and the right of merit to rule.”<sup>66</sup> Increasingly, and not entirely coincidentally, his suggestions started to sound more and more like White nationalist fascism.

Grant identified several critical problems that required solutions, and he favored government regulation. In the years that followed the publication of *The Passing of the Great Race*, addressing the extent of immigration was one of Grant’s primary concerns. His influence helped inspire the immigration restrictions acts of 1917 (the Literacy Act), 1921 (the Emergency Quota Act), and 1924 (the Asian Exclusion Act). The latest of these completely halted immigration from Asia, imposed quota limits on immigration from the entire Eastern Hemisphere, and established the US Border Patrol.

Furthermore, according to Grant, there were entirely too many “undesirable types” already in the country’s population. In conceptualizing a broad plan for preventing “the passing of the great race,” Grant expressed the need to disregard the sanctity of human life. He believed the notion was a confused interpretation of divine laws. Grant argued that this perception “tend[s] to prevent both the elimination of defective infants and the sterilization of such adults as are themselves of no value to the community.”<sup>67</sup> Grant offered a “practical and merciful” eugenics solution: through sterilization, the state could ensure that the unfit, the insane, the weak, the diseased, and the criminal could not curse future generations with their progeny. However, his envisioned culling would need to gradually expand, “perhaps ultimately to worthless race types.”<sup>68</sup> At one point, Grant even teased the idea that up to 20 percent of the US population would require sterilization.<sup>69</sup>

Inhibiting reproduction was one approach, but preventing racial mingling would be essential too. Grant insisted that children born to parents of different races belonged to the “lower type.” Bringing “halfbreeds into the world,” Grant stated, was “regarded as a social and racial crime of the first magnitude. The laws against miscegenation must be greatly extended if the higher races are to be maintained.”<sup>70</sup> Grant proposed and enacted—to one degree or another—strategies to address this issue in the form of state-level anti-miscegenation laws during the 1920s. Among the laws legislators passed was Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act of 1924, which prohibited racial intermarriage and sought to codify the notion that

65 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 65.

66 Grant, “Introduction,” 1920, xxx-xxxi.

67 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 45.

68 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 45.

69 Allen, “Culling the Herd?” 45

70 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 56.

“one drop” of non-White “blood” would alter a person’s racial classification. The definitions included in this law corresponded precisely with Grant’s perspective of racial virtue. Alabama (1927) and Georgia (1927) adopted similar approaches to measuring White purity based on the Virginia law.<sup>71</sup> For Grant, such government regulation was necessary to “check the evils of the Melting Pot.”<sup>72</sup>

The 1916 *The Passing of the Great Race* was merely Grant’s prologue. His focus turned away from game conservation and concentrated almost entirely on promoting what can rightly be regarded as one of the earliest prototypes for the Great Replacement conspiracy theory. His subsequent articles and books included, “Discussion of Article on Democracy and Heredity” (1919), “The Racial Transformation of America” (1924), *The Conquest of a Continent: or, The Expansion of Races in America* (1933), and *The Alien in Our Midst; or, “Selling Our Birthright for a Mess of Pottage”* (1930). He also edited *The Founders of the Republic on Immigration, Naturalization and Aliens* (1928) and authored the introduction to Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (1920). In each of these subsequent publications, Grant further developed and articulated ideas initially written in 1916 and, as the years progressed, his diatribes became even less defensible as science and more clearly discernible as propaganda.<sup>73</sup> Among other arguments, Grant claimed that voices like his were being censored and silenced.<sup>74</sup>

When he was not denigrating immigrants in print or collecting Pecora trophies in the mountains, Grant actively advocated for eugenics and Nordic superiority. In 1918, Grant, along with Charles Benedict Davenport and Henry Fairfield Osborn, founded the Galton Society, which supported racial research in physical anthropology. He also organized the 2nd International Eugenics Congress with Davenport and Osborn (1921), acting as its treasurer and key fundraiser. *The Passing of the Great Race* was one of the congress’s 131 exhibits assembled at the American Museum of Natural History to demonstrate the problematic nature of immigration. Grant

71 Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 118–19.

72 Madison Grant, “The Racial Transformation of America,” *The North American Review* 219, no. 820 (1924): 352. The US Supreme Court overturned each of these laws in *Loving v Virginia* (1967).

73 Aside from calling race “the greatest of all privileges,” Grant’s 1919 article aimed at democracy itself. If power were only entrusted to those classes with the capacity for rule who “were deeply imbued with the unwritten traditions of the nation,” then the US would not need to regulate its leaders. Instead, “[i]t is pathetic to note that in our American democracy . . . any man is qualified for any office without ‘distinction of race, creed or color.’” Madison Grant, “Discussion of Article on Democracy and Heredity,” *The Journal of Heredity* 10, no. 4 (1919): 164. Franz Boas called *The Rising Tide of Color* “a menace to the peace of the world”; see “Author of ‘Riding Tide of Color’ called Klux,” *The Chicago Defender*, January 27, 1923, 1.

74 Grant believed that many Americans privately thought, felt, and spoke as he did. There was a solution to this predicament: more “native Americans” needed to speak up. Grant’s suggestions about what the flood of immigrants had done to the country, he believed, needed to be publicized; it was vital that the “shifty” nature of “these aliens” was exposed and laid bare. Grant challenged his readers to try to attack races, or religions, or the loyalty of immigrants in the press, arguing if they tried, then they would be “quickly relieved of the idea that this is a free country.” Grant, “Discussion of Article on Democracy and Heredity,” 165.

joined the Immigration Restriction League and served as its vice president from 1922 until his death. Additionally, he co-founded the American Eugenics Society in 1926 with Osborn and others and chaired their Committee on Selective Immigration.

Given the intolerably harsh rhetoric Grant espoused over the second half of his career, it should be unsurprising that Grant's most significant contribution was the effect that he had on the Nazi Party. *The Passing of the Great Race* became part of the basis for Adolf Hitler's ideas in *Mein Kampf* as well as later during the Third Reich's final solution of the so-called Jewish problem. As investigative journalist Edwin Black observes in *War Against the Weak*, Hitler's magnum opus contained page after page of strikingly similar examples, paraphrases, and borderline plagiarism of Grant's 1916 book.<sup>75</sup>

This assertion of a connection between these two like-minded men is not mere historical conjecture. The unpublished 1971 autobiography of Leon Fradley Whitney, Executive Secretary of the American Eugenics Society in the 1930s and 1940s, described a direct connection between Grant and Hitler. Around 1934, Whitney received a request from the Nazi Party asking for a copy of his recently published book, *The Case for Sterilization* (1934). He sent a copy of the book accompanied by a personal note to Hitler, which the German Führer personally acknowledged. Whitney thought that the letter might impress or interest the society's Chairman of the Committee on Selective Immigration. Grant's health had started to decline by that time and impeded him from leaving home. Upon his next visit to Grant's Manhattan penthouse, Whitney brought the letter along and showed it to him. Whitney recalled,

He smiled, reached for a folder on his desk, and gave me a letter from Hitler to read. It was in German. It thanked our chairman for writing THE PASSING OF THE GREAT RACE and said that the book was his Bible.<sup>76</sup>

Hitler owned a copy with an inscribed dedication from Julius Friedrich Lehmann, the German publisher of Grant's book, which was among his most valuable possessions. After World War II, the US military discovered 40,000 items, including the 3,000-book "Hitler library" stashed in a mine.<sup>77</sup> These items were shipped to the

<sup>75</sup> Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), 274–76. One example from Black (employing the 1943 Ralph Manheim translation of *Mein Kampf*), quoted here in its entirety, reads, "Grant wrote, 'Speaking English, wearing good clothes and going to school and to church do not transform a Negro into a white man. Nor was a Syrian or Egyptian freedman transformed into a Roman by wearing a toga and applauding his favorite gladiator in the amphitheater.' In a similar vein, Hitler wrote, 'But it is a scarcely conceivable fallacy of thought to believe that a Negro or a Chinese, let us say, will turn into a German because he learns German and is willing to speak the German language in the future and perhaps even give his vote to a German political party.' He also noted, 'Surely no one will call the purely external fact that most of this lice-ridden [Jewish] migration from the East speaks German a proof of their German origin and nationality.'" 274–75.

<sup>76</sup> Leon Fradley Whitney, "Autobiography," 1971, page 205 (page 33 of pdf), MSS.B.W613b, American Philosophical Society, <https://diglib.amphilsoc.org/islandora/object/text:287761>.

<sup>77</sup> Third Reich Collection, Library of Congress.

US, and in 1952 they were added to the Library of Congress. Hitler's copy of *The Passing of the Great Race* (4th Edition, German translation: *Der Untergang der grossen Rasse: die Rassen als Grundlage der Geschichte Europas*) was among the confiscated books.<sup>78</sup>

Grant and other eugenic leaders continued to update Nazi scientists on the progress of American eugenics throughout the 1930s. In turn, the Nazis used these practices to model European policies. President of the Reichstag and Chief Representative for Nature Conservation, Hermann Göring, planned an international hunting exhibition for autumn of 1937, for which Grant was recruited to help organize. But Grant, who was scheduled to attend as Göring's guest, died in May, less than six months before the *Internationalen Jagdausstellung* in Berlin.<sup>79</sup> Eight years would pass before the world learned of the Holocaust and the horrors Grant's hazardous doctrine wrought. At the Nuremberg Military Tribunals during *United States of America v Karl Brandt, et al.* in 1947, Robert Servatiust, counsel for Major General Karl Brandt of the SS (Hitler's personal physician), entered three pages of excerpts from *The Passing of the Great Race* as evidence for the defense to demonstrate that Germany's racial hygiene laws were in fact based on American "science."<sup>80</sup>

#### Madison Grant: Redwoods' Savior

Despite Grant's ideologies, actions, and rhetoric, two California State Parks still honored his memory in 2019 in a manner that ignored these racist and eugenic legacies. The reason behind this acknowledgment was straightforward. In 1918, Madison Grant, John Merriam, and Henry Fairfield Osborn (who wrote the preface to Grant's 1916 book) established the Save the Redwoods League. This organization, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2018, has been responsible for the protection of over 200,000 acres of redwood forests by purchasing lands vital to safeguarding their preservation; in the process, their endeavors have enabled the establishment of sixty-six parks and reserves dedicated to the continued protection of these majestic trees.<sup>81</sup> Back in 1931, California honored Grant, Merriam, and Osborn with the dedication of the Founders Tree located at Humboldt Redwoods State Park, which was then the tallest known tree in existence. Later, California State Parks designated a portion of Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park as the Madison Grant Forest and Elk Refuge, where they placed the granite boulder and plaque referenced at the beginning of this article in 1948. (See Figure 2)

<sup>78</sup> von Madison Grant, *Der Untergang der grossen Rasse: die Rassen als Grundlage der Geschichte Europas*, ins Deutsche übertragen von Rudolf Polland, 4. Aufl. (München: J.F. Lehmann, 1925), GN575.G754 1925, Third Reich Collection, Library of Congress.

<sup>79</sup> Spiro observes, "it is fitting that Grant's final project had combined hunting and the Nazis," *Defending the Master Race*, 385–86.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Servatiust, NMT 1 Defense Counsel (*USA v Karl Brandt et al.* 1946–47), "Karl Brandt Nr. 51, Extract from the book: 'The Passing of the Great Race' by Madison Grant," February 5, 1947, 116–18, Brandt, K. 57, Harvard Law School Library, Nuremberg Trials Project.

<sup>81</sup> "Creating Parks and Reserves," Save the Redwoods League, <https://www.savetheredwoods.org/what-we-do/our-work/protect/create>.





**Figure 2.** “Madison Grant memorial at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park.” (Photograph by author, January 17, 2019)

Grant made some constructive contributions, but his racist ideologies tinged everything he touched. He helped establish the Bronx Zoo yet supported Ota Benga’s caged exhibition alongside apes because it illustrated his ideas about racial differences. Grant co-founded the Save the Redwoods League, which led to several California state parks, and he also worked alongside other Boone and Crockett Club members reserving land for Denali and Glacier National Parks.<sup>82</sup> But Grant’s motivation was always to preserve what he regarded as apex species: big trees and big animals. And he did so to preserve them for the future enjoyment of what he recognized as the most important apex species of all: White Americans of northern European origin.

## Conclusion

After reading the words exalting Madison Grant at Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, I recalled a brief quote from *The Passing of the Great Race*. I cannot pretend to have remembered it verbatim, but I did recollect its sentiments. In one of the most chilling lines of the book, Grant stated, “The laws of nature require the obliteration of the unfit, and human life is valuable only when it is of use to the community or

<sup>82</sup> See Madison Grant, “Saving the Redwoods,” 182–200; “The Establishment of Mt. McKinley National Park,” 438–45; and “The Beginnings of Glacier National Park,” 446–70, in *Hunting and Conservation: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* ed. Georgie Bird Grinnell and Charles Sheldon (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925).

race.”<sup>83</sup> One of the responsibilities of public historians is to consider how we deal with problematic narratives. I felt then, as I do now, that someone who made such sizable contributions to inequality and discrimination in the United States and abroad should not have their memory honored and enshrined on lands designed for the enjoyment of all peoples. However, I was hardly the first to take notice of the inappropriateness of Grant’s name on California state lands.

Spiro’s opens Chapter 11 of his biography of Grant, “Saving the Redwoods,” with a quote from a 1991 letter addressed to the California Department of Parks and Recreation. In a cleverly appropriate analogy, an unnamed tourist equated honoring Grant with “erecting a monument to Adolf Hitler for his part in founding the Volkswagen Company.”<sup>84</sup> At the end of the chapter, Spiro provides the response of Donald Murphy, the department’s director from 1992 to 1998. Murphy’s reply opened by posing the following question: “Is it ‘historically bizarre’ to commemorate Grant’s undeniable efforts on behalf of conservation in light of his undeniable racism?” His response defended Grant’s beliefs as similar to “many of his life’s contemporaries.” After all, Murphy maintained, Grant was “a creature of the nineteenth century.” Many “creatures of the nineteenth century,” including W. E. B. Du Bois, Franz Boas, and Margaret Mead wholesale disregarded Grant’s eugenic views and fiercely opposed racial inequality. Nevertheless, by Murphy’s estimation, others did not endure the same scrutiny as Grant merely because their ideas were not written down and preserved for posterity. Explaining his decision not to remove the monument, Murphy wrote, “[h]armony among peoples comes from the true principles and attitudes of the present, not from purging the past.” Spiro closes the chapter by applauding Murphy’s letter as “a marvelous rejoinder to those whose inclinations are to purge the past.”<sup>85</sup>

The New York Zoological Society changed its name to the Wildlife Conservation Society in 1993 and later expunged Madison Grant’s name from the area’s zoos and the society that he helped create. Nowhere on its website’s timeline of “Our History” does Grant’s name make an appearance. Its “Origin” page credits Roosevelt, the Boone and Crockett Club, and a nameless committee.<sup>86</sup> On Juneteenth, 2020, the society’s president and CEO, Cristián Samper, issued an official apology for the treatment of Ota Benga as well as its bigoted actions and attitudes toward non-White peoples. Furthermore, the society denounced the “writings and philosophies advanced by Madison Grant.”<sup>87</sup>

Grant and his ideologies do not deserve gentle treatment. His eugenic suppositions and contentions remain antithetical to Californian and American principles.

83 Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 45. This passage also appears near the top of page two in Servatiust’s “Karl Brandt Nr. 51” cited above.

84 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 266.

85 Spiro appears to quote most, if not all, of Murphy’s response, *Defending the Master Race*, 293.

86 “Our History,” *Wildlife Conservation Society*, <https://www.wcs.org/125/timeline>.

87 Cristián Samper, “Letter Issued to WCS Staff in the US and Globally on June 19, 2020,” *Wildlife Conservation Society*, <https://www.wcs.org/reckoning-with-our-past-present-and-future-at-wcs>.

The deliberate rhetoric Grant recklessly expressed was exclusionary, hateful, and had tangible consequences for immigrants, Mexican Americans, Native peoples, Jewish people, Black people, and others who did not fit Grant's Nordic exemplar. Moreover, he was not practicing science. Yet Grant asserted—and led many others to believe—that his ideas were scientific. Race, as a social hierarchy of inequality, certainly has real-world consequences; but it was not in Grant's time, nor is it today, a biological reality.<sup>88</sup>

When distasteful legacies such as Grant's corrode public lands—ancestral Yurok lands, for example—then they need to be revisited. In November 2021, Deb Haaland, the first Indigenous Secretary of the Interior and a member of the Pueblo of Laguna, called for the removal of derogatory names on federal lands. This task will undoubtedly fall to Charles “Chuck” F. Sams III, an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the first Indigenous

88 At the beginning the twentieth century, the general public and most scientists believed race to be a biological reality. The earliest scholars to assault the race concept were Franz Boas and W. E. B. Du Bois. In a report to the US Immigration Commission, Boas argued his data on immigrants “are so definite that, while heretofore we had the right to assume that human types are stable, all the evidence is now in favor of a great plasticity of human types, and permanence of types in new surroundings appears rather as the exception than as the rule.” Franz Boas, *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1911), 5. In 1920, W. E. B. Du Bois, wrote in reference to racial difference: “This belief is not based on science, else it would be held as a postulate of the most tentative kind, ready at any time to be withdrawn in the face of facts. . . . It is simply passionate, deep-seated heritage, and as such can be moved by neither argument nor fact.” W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920), 73. Ashley Montagu published *Man's Most Dangerous Myth*, which went through six editions spanning fifty-five years (first published in 1942), asserted, “Differences are not denied where they exist. What is denied is that they are biologically either great or significant enough to justify men in making them the pretext for social discrimination of any kind”; and “Race, it should always be remembered, is an abstraction, an arbitrary label of a human grouping culturally defined in a given society.” Ashley Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*, 6th ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997). Offering the first genetic evidence against racial classifications, Richard Lewontin wrote in 1974, “It is clear that our perception of relatively large differences between human races and subgroups, as compared to the variation within these groups, is indeed a biased perception and that, based on randomly chosen genetic differences, human races and populations are remarkably similar to each other, with the largest part by far of human variation being accounted for by the differences between individuals. Human racial classification is of no social value and is positively destructive of social and human relations. Since such racial classification is now seen to be of virtually no genetic or taxonomic significance either, no justification can be offered for its continuance.” Richard C. Lewontin, “The Apportionment of Human Diversity,” *Evolutionary Biology* 6 (1972): 397. He further expounded on this idea two years later in *The Genetic Basis of Evolutionary Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). Lewontin's research was revisited in 2016 with modern approaches and showed even stronger statistical significance to support his claims in Keith L. Hunley, Graciela S. Cabana, and Jeffrey C. Long, “The Apportionment of Human Diversity Revisited,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 160, no. 4 (2016): 561–69. Other recent treatments on this topic include Jonathan Marks, *What It Means to Be 98% Chimpanzee: Apes, People, and Their Genes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Robert W. Sussman, *The Myth of Race: the Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Michael Yudell, *Race Unmasked: Biology and Race in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); and Terence Keel, *Divine Variations: How Christian Thought Became Racial Science* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

Director of the National Park Service.<sup>89</sup> Among Haaland’s comments that accompanied the adoption of Secretarial Order 3404 was her firm assertion that “our nation’s lands and waters should be places to celebrate the outdoors and our shared cultural heritage—not to perpetuate the legacies of oppression.”<sup>90</sup> A memorial on public lands dedicated to one of our country’s most virulent racists is deeply problematic. When public lands are not welcoming to all peoples, this exclusivity continues to prop up cruel systems of persecution that were put into place by people like Grant. The outright “purge” suggested as the alternative to leaving Grant’s commemoration untouched is assuredly not the only viable approach. This false dilemma implies that eliminating Grant’s name from the parks or leaving the monument in place, undisturbed forever, are the only two potential courses of action.

The deceptive claim asserting that altering or removing public memorials and monuments erases the past should no longer be heeded; the past never will be changed or wiped away. The individuals whose lives were most gravely affected by the teachings and influence of the man celebrated at Prairie Creek cannot have their sterilizations, deportations, separations from family, or executions undone. Indeed, arguments that contend modifications should never be made to the presentation of public-facing narratives prop up enduring structural inequalities such as the ones which led to these atrocities in the first place. As historian Joy M. Giguere assures us, such arguments treat memorials and monuments as static even though they are subject to evolving attitudes and sentiments of the communities where they are located.<sup>91</sup> Recounting history in a manner that does not unapologetically celebrate a racist’s memory more authentically befits Californians’ twenty-first-century values.

As public historians, it is our duty to remember and preserve the past, but it is not our obligation to continue paying tribute to its sins.

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*David G. McIntosh* is a public historian of race and of science, and his interests and background lie in the intersection of these fields of study. He is especially interested in how racial pseudoscience influenced anthropology and archaeology and how those disciplines, in turn, bolstered the erasures of Native histories and lived experiences from the landscape. His scholarship is oriented toward making public spaces dedicated to learning about the past more welcoming to diverse audiences by confronting distortions and misconceptions presented on local, state, and national lands.

89 Jiselle Halfmoon, “Chuck Sams confirmed as National Park Service Director,” *Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation*, <https://www.ctuir.org/news/chuck-sams-confirmed-as-national-park-service-director>.

90 “Secretary Haaland Takes Action to Remove Derogatory Names from Federal Lands,” *US Department of the Interior*, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretary-haaland-takes-action-remove-derogatory-names-federal-lands>.

91 Joy M. Giguere, “The (Im)Movable Monument: Identity, Space, and The Louisville Confederate Monument,” *The Public Historian* 41, no. 4 (November 2019): 59.